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DR. GROSART'S ROSALIND

Dr. Grosart's well known interpretation of the Rosalind *loci* in the *Shepherd's Calender* is definitely based on his whole conception of early Spenserian biography. He declared that Spenser's family originated in northeastern Lancashire, and based this opinion on Spenser's spelling of his name and on his apparent use of Lancashire scenery and Lancashire dialect, especially in the *Shepherd's Calender*.¹ Arguing from this premise, he maintained that Spenser, at the end of his University career, visited his relatives in Lancashire, there fell in love with Rosalind, and wrote the *Calender*,² and finally, as a corollary to all this, he declared himself "satisfied" that Rosalind was some as yet "untraced Rose or Eliza or Alice Dineley or Dynley or Dinlei" of north-eastern Lancashire.³

This theory, originally promulgated in 1882-4, has been much attacked of recent years. In 1897, Herford found the diction and grammar of the *Calender* "highly composite,"⁴ but drew no conclusions as to the tenability of Grosart's opinions: indeed, he appears to have accepted them. In 1908, Long pointed out that Elizabethan spelling of proper names was not fixed, that the scenery in the *Calender* is not especially Lancastrian, and that the words beginning with A and B in Grosart's list were not peculiar to Lancashire—if we may use modern dialects as a criterion for Elizabethan: in fact, Spenser could have found most of the words in Chaucer or in the English and Scotch Chaucerians.⁵ Long's work has shaken the confidence of many scholars in Grosart's theory.⁶ In 1919, the present author re-

¹ Spenser, *Works*, ed. Grosart, I, xlii *et seq.*

² *Ibid.* I, 43 *et seq.* The recent discovery that Spenser was Secretary to the Bishop of Rochester in 1578 certainly does not bear out this conjecture, *Pro. Brit. Acad.* 1907-8, 103.

³ *Ibid.* I, 50 *et seq.*

⁴ Spenser, *Shep Cal.*, London, 1914, xiv, lvii, *etc.* Even this edition shows no change from Herford's original acceptance of Grosart.

⁵ *Anglia* XXXI, 72 *et seq.*

⁶ Higginson in his *Spenser's Shepherd's Calender*, New York, 1912, 289 *et seq.*, especially emphasizes the significance of Long's work. Higginson reviews scholarly opinion at length.

viewed the entire list of words glossed by E. K., and came to the conclusion that a dialectical provenience need be sought for only a very few and that those few were localized mainly in Yorkshire rather than Lancashire.⁷ Tests of vocabulary and of inflectional forms, have, therefore, seriously undermined Grosart's point of view, but, since it is still widely propagated by standard works and occasionally by a current volume,⁸ any further evidence may still be timely.

Although the *Calender* has been studied for diction and grammatical forms, questions of phonology, especially as expressed in the rhymes, have been largely neglected; and, indeed, Herford remarks that the phonetic characteristics of the Lancashire dialect of Elizabeth's day are "chiefly a matter of inference."⁹ Since the publication of his book, however, further light has been shed on the matter: in 1920, Brown edited the *Stonyhurst Pageants*,¹⁰ a body of verse running to almost nine thousand lines, which, as he shows in his *Introduction*, was composed in Lancashire shortly after 1610. This is a far safer test of Grosart's dialect theory than the evidence of verbal peculiarities of which we have record only in the late Nineteenth Century; and, although pronunciation may have changed in Lancashire between the 1570's and the early Seventeenth Century, the change was probably small, for dialects are conservative and Lancashire was remote from foreign influence.

The significant fact is that the *Pageants* show a peculiarity not usually to be found in Elizabethan literature: the rhyming of *ee* as in *seen* with *i* as in *sign*. Thus, as Brown points out in his *Introduction*, "*bee, hee, mee, see, thee, and tree* are made to rhyme with *by, cry, dry, eye, flye, I, lye, nigh, thigh, try, tye, and why*."¹¹ The natural inference is that these words must have

⁷ *Jour. Eng. Ger. Phil.* XVIII, 556 *et seq.*

⁸ *Vide* Higginson, *op. cit.*, 290, note 13. One might add other names to this list.

⁹ Herford, *op. cit.* liii.

¹⁰ Carleton Brown, *The Stonyhurst Pageants*, Göttingen and Baltimore, 1920.

¹¹ Brown, to be sure, notes (p. 11*-12*) that the author had a "surprisingly weak feeling for rhyme"; for there are twenty-two non-rhyming lines, and at times unstressed syllables are used in rhyme. False rhymes in accented vowels, however, do not constitute a typical license in the *Pageants*; and the *seen-sign* type of rhyme is so common that the author can hardly have felt them imperfect.

been pronounced nearly, if not exactly, alike. The association, moreover, of this peculiarity with the northern dialects—if not especially with Lancashire—is borne out by its appearance north of the Tweed: turning over some forty pages of Drummond's *Works*,¹² one finds six cases of it. In short, if one may hazard a theory in so difficult a field as Elizabethan phonology, it would appear that in the North, and particularly in Lancashire, ME *ē* shifted its sound, before or during Elizabethan times, to the modern pronunciation, expressed in *maître phonétique* as *i*—without any corresponding shift of ME *ī* to the modern diphthong *ai*. At all events, it is reasonably certain that *ī* and *ē* (spelled *ee*) were pronounced alike.

Of the London pronunciation of this period, much has been written, but there is some uncertainty among scholars as to the exact pronunciation of *ē* and *ī*.¹³ One fact, however, is evident: the two sounds were not pronounced alike. Viëtor points out that Shakespeare never makes such rhymes as *he* and *die*.¹⁴ They do not appear in the 832 lines of Marlowe's *Hero and Leander*, nor in Chapman's 1616 additional lines, nor in Donne's five satires—although he is much given to doubtful rhymes. All of these poets come from the South of England: Chapman and Donne doubtless spoke the London English of the day; Marlowe may have intermixed some Kentish; and Shakespeare seems to have carried a few traces of Warwickshire dialect into his plays. It seems, therefore, fair to say that in London, and probably in most of the southern dialects, *ē* and *ī*, however they were pronounced, were clearly differentiated; whereas in Lancashire, they must have been very similar, if not exactly the same, in sound.

Although the *Shepherd's Calendar* has many doubtful

In the 1048 lines of *Joseph*, it appears nine times; and, in the first thousand lines of the *Moses*, it appears sixteen times. I count the sound only when it appears under primary stress.

¹² Ed. Turnbull, London, 1856, 5-45.

¹³ E.g. Bradley in *Shakespeare's England*, II, 542-3. Cf. Sweet, 234-5; Viëtor, I, 13 *et seq.*; Wyld, 71 *et seq.*, *et al.*

¹⁴ Viëtor, *Shakespeare's Pronunciation*, London, 1906, I, 14. Rhymes in unstressed or secondarily stressed *-y* or *-ie* are, of course, common; but vowels in atonic syllables are regularly "obscured" in English. It is only of stressed *ī* and *ē* that this paper takes account.

rhymes,¹⁵ Spenser never rhymes *-ee-* and *-i-* in syllables bearing a primary stress: in the *April Eclogue*, indeed, he even prefers to repeat *green*, rather than substitute such a word as *fine*, which would have solved his technical difficulty at once.¹⁶ The separate use of the two rhyme-sounds, moreover, is very common: in the 123 couplets of February, for example, there are fifteen rhymes in *i* and ten in *ee*¹⁷. If Spenser pronounced the two sounds similarly, in the fashion of Lancashire dialect, it is inconceivable that he should never once have rhymed them together. Further positive evidence, however, is not lacking: even when Spenser rhymes *-y* atonic, or with secondary stress as in *jollity*, with such words as *me* and *thee*, he regularly spells the *-y* as *-ee*,¹⁸ showing thereby that he intended a slight change of pronunciation, even in that "obscured" vowel, and implying that such a change in pronunciation was necessary in order to make the rhyme accurate.¹⁹ In *February*, moreover, Spenser actually follows a couplet rhyming *dye* and *enemie* with one rhyming *plea* and *lea*.²⁰ Surely, if these rhymes were exactly the same, he would not have chosen to repeat them, thus giving the effect of a quatrain in *aaaa*.

¹⁵ E.g. *foeman* and *came*, *February*, 21-2; *loord* and *words*, *July*, 33, 35; *nyne* and *rhyme*, *November*, 53-5. In the *Pageants*, the doubtful rhymes seem to have been caused by the length of the line and the consequently weakened feeling for sound-repetition; but, in the *Calender*, the lines are usually rather short; and the reason for the bad rhymes must be sought rather in the inexperience of the poet and the difficulties of the form. *Vide Jour. Eng. Ger. Phil.*, XVIII, 560 *et seq.*

¹⁶ *April*, 1 55 *et seq.*

¹⁷ I count only cases where at least one rhyme bears an undoubted primary stress. The uncertainty of pronunciation of *-ea-* and of *-ie-* makes an exact count almost impossible.

¹⁸ This change of spelling appears regularly in words of Romance origin where the *-y* stands for an O.F. *e* or *é*. I find it in *February*, ll 207-8; *May*, ll 191-2, 221-2, 247-8; *June*, 97 *et seq.*, *September*, 50-51, 64-5, 238-39; *November*, 26 *et seq.*, 114 *et seq.* The one exception is, I suspect, a printer's error, *May*, 302-3. In rhyming *-y* with *-y* or *-ye* or *-ie* under primary or secondary stress, he regularly spells the former *-y* or *-ye* or *-ie*; and he rhymes these rather indiscriminately with one another.

¹⁹ Cf. *Jour. Eng. Ger. Phil.* XXVIII, 564: e.g. *beheight* and *bynempt*. Spenser does not hesitate to vary spelling or grammar in the *Calendar* to make his rhymes.

²⁰ *February*, 1 155 *et seq.*

But one conclusion seems possible: that Spenser did not pronounce *i* and *ee* alike, in short, that in this respect at least, the phonology implied in the rhymes of the *Calender* is not Lancastrian, any more than is the grammar or the diction. Spenser, apparently, did not naturally speak Lancastrian; and, moreover, even when he was trying to imitate dialect, and largely Northern dialect at that, he did not know or at least did not care to use this striking phonological characteristic. The results of the present study reinforce the conclusions already apparent, that Grosart's argument for his Lancashire theory is quite unsound, and that his identification of Rosalind with a supposed Rose Dinley of North-East Lancashire, is an unsupported guess and nothing more.

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